

A Look at the Production of Korean Referring Expressions by English Dominant Speakers

Introduction

- Entities in discourse can be encoded by different referential expressions, such as proper names (*John*), definite descriptions (*the man*), and pronouns (*he*), depending on their discourse status.
- Heritage and L2 speakers of null argument languages have been observed to consistently replace null arguments with overt nominal expressions in discourse pragmatically inappropriate contexts[1],[2].
- Interface Hypothesis proposes that interface structures between cognitive domains such as syntax and pragmatics are less likely to be successfully acquired by advanced L2 learners than structures without this interface, such as narrow-syntax structures.

Research Focus

This research aims to test Interface Hypothesis, and to determine whether errors made by heritage speakers of Korean are a result of interference from their dominant language (English), or of incomplete acquisition.

Participants

- 10 heritage speakers (6 f, 4 m) were recorded. All heritage speakers have two Korean parents and were raised speaking Korean at home.
- 5 native Korean speakers (3 f, 2m) were recorded and transcribed as a baseline.
- 5 advanced L2 speakers (4 f, 1m) were also recorded, although they are not included in the data here.

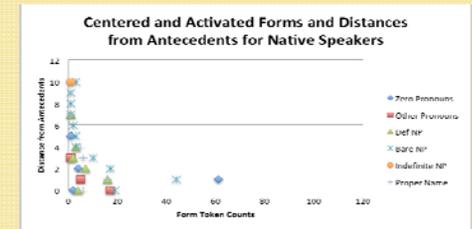
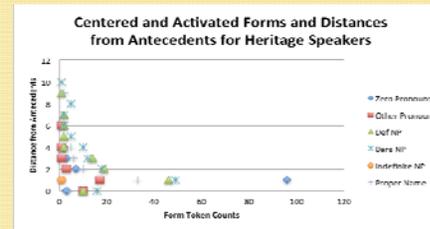
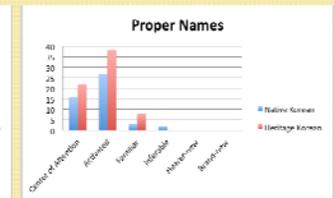
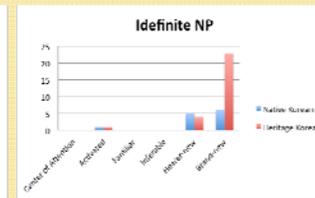
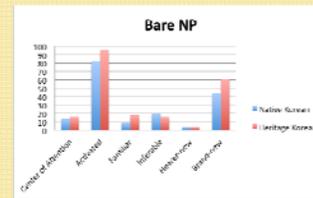
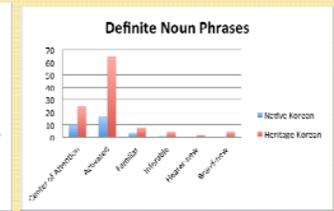
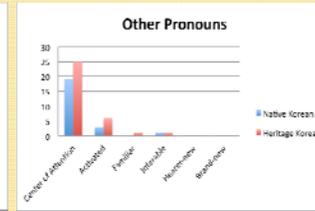
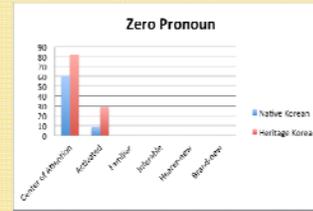
Methodology

Korean discourse was elicited with a retelling task. Participants watched an abridged version of Chaplin's silent film, *Modern Times*, and were asked to retell the story. Referents were coded in terms of topicality and saliency according to the following scheme:

- **Center of Attention:** Immediately preceding subject, higher order topic.
- **Activated:** Mentioned early in discourse, not current topic.
- **Familiar:** Referent is known to interlocutors from prior knowledge.
- **Inferable:** A unique and identifiable referent, but not familiar.
- **Hearer-new:** Referent is known to speaker, not hearer.
- **Brand-new:** General referent, at the type level.

A goodness of fit test was used to determine how well the heritage population fit the L1 population, elsewhere tests for independence were used to determine the relationship between linguistic form and cognitive status.

Results



Quantitative info: Only heritage production of definite noun phrases differed significantly from production by natives. There was a significant correlation of form with cognitive status for zero pronouns (Center of Attention), bare NPs (Activated and Brand-new), and indefinite pronouns (Brand-new).

Analysis

- Overusage of definite NPs by heritage speakers may be due to English interference with the more common constive meaning in Korean (그 남자).
- Heritage speakers employ zero pronouns more in topic shifts than native speakers. Such a problem is not predicted by Interface Hypothesis.
- However, as predicted, heritage speakers also appear to generalize use of overt pronouns, such as numerals (둘, 두 사람, 세명, etc).

SOURCES

- 1: Kim, J-H. 2007. *Binding interpretations in Korean heritage speakers and L2 learners*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- 2: Serratrice, L., Sorace, A. and Paoli, S. 2004. Crosslinguistic influence at the syntax-pragmatics interface: Subjects and objects in Italian-English bilingual and monolingual acquisition. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition* 7, 193-206.